

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Pacific
Northwest
Region

June 1990



Land and Resource Management Plan

Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie
National Forest



LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Final Environmental Impact Statement Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest

PREFACE

This National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) guides all natural resource management activities and establishes management standards and guidelines for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. It describes resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for resource management.

The Forest Plan will be reviewed, and updated if necessary, at least every five years. It will be revised on a ten-year cycle, or at least every 15 years.

This Forest Plan replaces previous land and resource management plans for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, with the exception of the Alpine Lakes Area Land Management Plan and the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, which are both incorporated. Upon approval, subsequent activities affecting the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest must be in compliance with this Forest Plan. In addition, permits, contracts and other instruments for the use and occupancy of National Forest System land must be in conformance with this Forest Plan.

If any particular provision of this Forest Plan, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances, is found to be invalid, the remainder of the Forest Plan and the application of that provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.

Information regarding this Plan can be obtained from:

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE FOREST PLAN

This Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) guides all natural resource management activities and establishes management standards and guidelines for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. It describes resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for resource management.

The Forest Plan:

- o establishes Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives;
- o establishes Forest-wide standards and guidelines applying to future activities;
- o establishes management area direction, including management area prescriptions and standards and guidelines applying to future management activities in that management area;
- o establishes the allowable sale quantity for timber and identifies land suitable for timber management;
- o establishes monitoring and evaluation requirements;
- o recommends 30 rivers be added to the National Wild and Scenic River System.

The Forest Plan embodies the provisions of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), the implementing regulations, and other guiding documents. Land use determinations, standards and guidelines, and management prescriptions constitute a statement of the Forest Plan's management direction. However, the projected outputs, services, and rates of implementation are estimates and are dependent on the annual budgeting process. See Chapter 5, Budget Proposals for additional detail.

The Forest Plan will ordinarily be revised on a 10-year cycle, or at least every 15 years. It also may be revised whenever the Forest Supervisor determines that conditions or demands in the area covered by the Plan have changed significantly or when changes in Resource Planning Act policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on Forest level programs. The Forest supervisor will review the conditions on the land covered by the Plan and the demands of the public at least every 5 years to determine whether either has changed significantly.

B. RELATIONSHIP OF THE FOREST PLAN TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

Relationship to the FEIS and Record of Decision

This Forest Plan sets forth the direction for managing the land and resources of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. The plan results from extensive analysis and considerations addressed in the accompanying Environmental Impact

Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). It is based on Alternative J as presented in the FEIS and in the Record of Decision. Many aspects of the Forest Plan reflect numerous suggestions from the public in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and accompanying Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan. The planning process and the analysis procedures used to develop this Plan are described or referred to in the FEIS. The FEIS also describes and analyzes other alternatives considered in the planning process.

Specific activities and projects will be planned and implemented to carry out the direction in this Plan, the Forest will perform environmental analyses on these projects and activities. This subsequent project-level environmental analysis will use the data and evaluations in the Plan and FEIS as its basis. Environmental analysis of projects will be tiered to FEIS accompanying this Forest Plan.

Relationship to the Regional Guide

The Regional Guide for the Pacific Northwest Region, as amended December 8, 1988, provides direction for National Forest Plans. It includes standards and guidelines addressing the major issues and management concerns considered at the Regional level, to facilitate Forest Planning.

Relationship to Special Area Plans

In recent years, the United States Congress has enacted legislation that affects the management of two areas on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest: Alpine Lakes Management Area and the Skagit Wild and Scenic River.

The regulations (36 CFR 219.2(b)) guiding the development of Forest Plans state that “if in a particular case, special area authorities require the preparation of a separate special area plan, the direction in any such plan may be incorporated without modification.” For this reason the Alpine Lakes Area Management Plan and the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Management Plan will be incorporated unchanged in the Forest Plan.

The Alpine Lakes Area Management Plan

The Alpine Lakes Area Management Act of 1976 (PL 94-357) required that a separate plan be developed for the Alpine Lakes Area. This plan and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement was developed with extensive public involvement, and implemented in early 1982.

The Alpine Lakes area has been managed under the above Plan for approximately eight years. The Forest Plan holds constant the land designations and management as presented in the Alpine Lakes Area Management Plan. Problems which surface will be handled administratively, or when the Forest Plan is revised, in approximately ten years.

Management direction for the Alpine Lakes Management Area will be as set forth in the Alpine Lakes Area Management Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision, dated November 2, 1981.

The Skagit Wild and Scenic River Management Plan

The Skagit Wild and Scenic River was designated in 1978 (PL 95-625) and is managed under the 1984 Final River Management Analysis and Plan. This plan was developed with extensive public involvement and implemented in 1984.

The Skagit River area has been managed under the above plan for approximately six years. To date, neither the Forest Service nor the public have identified any major problems with the implementation of the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. The Forest Plan holds constant the management direction as presented in the River Management Analysis and Plan. Problems which surface will be handled administratively, or when the Forest Plan is revised, in approximately ten years.

Management direction for the Skagit Wild and Scenic River Management Area will be as set forth in the River Management Plan - Skagit River Record of Decision dated August 8, 1984.

Copies of both the Alpine Lakes Plan and the Skagit River Plan are available for review at the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Supervisors Office, 1022 First Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98104.

Relationship to Project Planning

This Forest Plan serves as the single land management plan for the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. All other land management plans are replaced by the direction in this plan, including

- Multiple Use Plan, Glacier Ranger District
- Multiple Use Plan, Baker River Ranger District
- Multiple Use Plan, Darrington Ranger District
- Multiple Use Plan, Monte Cristo Ranger District
- Multiple Use Plan, Skykomish Ranger District
- Multiple Use Plan, North Bend Ranger District
- Multiple Use Plan, White River Ranger District
- Timber Management Plan, Mt. Baker National Forest
- Timber Management Plan, Snoqualmie National Forest
- Wilderness Management Plan, Glacier Peak Wilderness
- Land Adjustment Plan, Snoqualmie National Forest
- Land Adjustment Plan, Mt. Baker National Forest

This Forest Plan document is used primarily by Forest Service field personnel in the planning and implementation of natural resource management activities. Refer to the above discussion regarding project-level planning, environmental analysis required, and tiering to the FEIS.

The management direction provided by this Forest Plan provides the framework within which project planning and activities will take place. The Plan defines management area goals and management standards that guide project activities toward achieving a desired future condition for the management area and, collectively, for the Forest. The Plan specifies a schedule for project activities and management practices. It provides guidance concerning potential projects and project limitations, including assumptions about the appropriate vegetation management practices for timber sale projects. On-the-ground project analysis verifies the appropriateness of those assumptions.

Within this guidance, projects are developed to most efficiently and effectively accomplish management goals and objectives. All projects will comply with all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

Project environmental analyses provide an essential source of information for Forest Plan monitoring: new or emerging issues or management concerns may be identified as project environmental analyses are completed; project analyses validate the management direction designed to achieve management area goals; and site-specific data may be used to update or correct data reported in the Forest Plan. All of this information is used, in the monitoring process, to determine when changes should be made in the Forest Plan.

C. PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Forest Plan contains five chapters, a brief references section, a glossary, and appendix material.

Chapter 1 - Introduction: includes a discussion of the purpose of the Plan, its relationship to other planning documents, and describes the planning area.

Chapter 2 - Summary of the Analysis of the Management Situation: summarizes the supply and demand conditions for significant market and non-market goods and services associated with the planning area. The focus is on those that relate to the major issues, concerns, and activities that are addressed in this Plan. Information and research needs identified during the planning process are listed at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 3 - Issues and Concerns: displays how the management plan addresses and responds to major public issues, management concerns, and resource opportunities identified during the planning process.

Chapter 4 - Forest Management Direction: is the heart of the Plan. It includes the management goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines that establish resource and project management direction for the next 10 to 15 years covered by this Plan. Also included is a general discussion of the desired future condition of the Forest in ten years, and - if the Plan were to remain unchanged - for fifty years. Chapter 4 contains the projected resource outputs, activities, and budget necessary to achieve the Forest Plan goals, and brief summaries of how the resource and activities will be managed under the Plan.

Chapter 4 also contains the Forest-wide standards and guidelines and the prescriptions for each Management Area (MA). These apply to all on-the-ground projects. The Forest-wide standards and guidelines generally apply to all areas of the Forest. The MA prescriptions define the types of activities that can occur within each Management Area.

The Forest Plan map (Preferred Alternative- J), published with the FEIS, shows the location of the various management areas discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 - Implementation of the Forest Plan: contains implementing direction for the Plan and the monitoring and evaluation program. Collectively, these sections explain how management direction will be Implemented, how implementation activities will be monitored and evaluated, and how the Plan can be kept current in light of changing conditions and other findings.

The remainder of the Plan contains a list of references, a glossary, and set of appendices - the projected activity schedules, by resource.

D. FOREST DESCRIPTION

The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest contains 1.7 million acres, located in Washington State, on the west side of the Cascade Mountains, within five counties of the Puget Sound area. The Forest includes land from the Canadian border to the northern boundary of Mt. Rainier National Park, and is also adjacent to the North Cascades National Park and the Wenatchee National Forest. Refer to Figure 1-1, the vicinity map on the following page.

Over half of the state's population live in the five-county area, a total of 2.5 million people in 1988. An additional 3.0 million reside in the Vancouver, Canada metropolitan area, just north of the Forest. The Puget Sound economy is quite diverse today, although the aerospace industry is still a major employer (Pascall and others 1989). The metropolitan area is a major center for finance, trade - especially to Pacific Rim nations - administration, and government. The forest products industry has experienced major changes over the last decade; wood products manufacturing outputs have been up the last three years, but with 25 percent fewer employees. In 1986, 47 out of 87 lumber mills in the Puget Sound area (which does not include the 35 export mills) were one-third to 100 percent dependent on National Forest logs for their operations. Nearly all the timber cut from the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie is consumed in the local area.

The Forest contains some of the nation's most beautiful country, including much of the rugged and glaciated North Cascade Mountains. Annual precipitation near the Cascade Crest is 100-200 inches; above 2,500 feet, most winter precipitation falls as snow. The upper reaches of seven major river systems are located on the Forest and provide both seasonal and year-round spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous and resident fish. There are 18 municipal watersheds on the Forest. The vegetation of the Forest consists of dense stands of western hemlock, Douglas-fir, and western redcedar at lower elevations, blending into Pacific silver fir, mountain hemlock, and true firs at the higher elevations. Above 6,000 feet, the vegetation is composed almost entirely of low growing species. The diversity of plant and tree communities provides a variety of habitats for wildlife species. Four Federally listed threatened and endangered species may occur on the Forest.

The Forest is rich in recreation opportunities and receives over 5 million recreation visits annually. Dispersed day-use recreation is emphasized. There are over 1,380 miles of trails. Hiking, horse use, and motorized recreation, plus alpine skiing at seven ski areas are among the many uses. Nearly 42 percent of the Forest is designated wilderness. Other designated areas include the 158 mile long Skagit Wild and Scenic River System, the Mt. Baker National Recreation Area (8,700 acres), and the multiple use Alpine Lakes management unit (148,000 acres). The diversity of both the physical and social settings adds to the complexity of issues and concerns facing Forest managers.

Figure 1-1
Vicinity Map

